From Darla’s desk

With harvest in full swing, I hope this finds you all having a safe and prosperous year. This summer has been an unseasonably dry one and this office is starting the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) signup. This program can assist in getting water to pastures that have failed watering systems due to the drought. Check out the article below for further details on eligible practices and signup dates.

We are also accepting applications for the Emergency Livestock Assistance Program (ELAP), for water hauling. This program assists producers that have hauled water to livestock pastures this year due to failed watering systems or dried up reservoirs. The ELAP program also covers excess feed purchases due to the drought. If you find your operation having to purchase feed in excess of the prior two years, our office may be able to assist you. Contact this office for further details and eligibility on this program.

Due to the increase in COVID cases, our office door is once again locked. Please call or email to make arrangements for us to assist you.

Park County FSA Accepting Emergency Conservation Program Applications

Farm Service Agency (FSA) will be holding a signup for the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) to address damages from the drought. ECP signup will begin on October 1, 2021 and end on October 31, 2021.

The approved ECP practices include spring development, drilling livestock water wells, installing watering pipelines, water tanks, storage tanks, and pumping systems.

ECP helps you with the cost to restore the farmland to pre-disaster conditions. You may receive up to 75 percent of the cost of approved restoration activity. Limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and beginning farmers and ranchers may receive up to 90 percent cost-share. The payment limitation for ECP is $500,000 per disaster, and the funds are limited to activities to return the land to the pre-disaster condition.

You must apply for assistance prior to beginning reconstructive work. FSA’s National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and environmental compliance review process is required to be completed before any actions are taken. Submitting an application after reconstructive work has been started may not qualify for ECP. Conservation concerns that were present on the land prior to the disaster are not eligible for ECP assistance.
FSA County Committees will evaluate applications based on an on-site inspection of the damaged land, taking into consideration that type and extent of the damage. An on-site inspection does not guarantee that cost-share funding will be provided.

For more information on ECP, contact the Park County USDA Service Center at (307) 754-9411, Ext. 2.

Disaster Assistance for 2021 Livestock Forage Losses

Producers in Park County are eligible to apply for 2021 Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) benefits on native pasture.

LFP provides compensation if you suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land, or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the National Office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire. You must complete a CCC-853 and submit the required supporting documentation no later than January 20, 2022, for 2021 losses.

For additional information about LFP, including eligible livestock and fire criteria, contact the Park County USDA Service Center at (307) 754-9411, Ext. 2.

Maintaining Good Credit History

Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans require applicants to have a satisfactory credit history. A credit report is requested for all FSA direct farm loan applicants. These reports are reviewed to verify outstanding debts, see if bills are paid timely and to determine the impact on cash flow.

Information on your credit report is strictly confidential and is used only as an aid in conducting FSA business.

Our farm loan staff will discuss options with you if you have an unfavorable credit report and will provide a copy of your report. If you dispute the accuracy of the information on the credit report, it is up to you to contact the issuing credit report company to resolve any errors or inaccuracies.

There are multiple ways to remedy an unfavorable credit score:

- Make sure to pay bills on time
  - Setting up automatic payments or automated reminders can be an effective way to remember payment due dates.
- Pay down existing debt
- Keep your credit card balances low
- Avoid suddenly opening or closing existing credit accounts

FSA’s farm loan staff will guide you through the process, which may require you to reapply for a loan after improving or correcting your credit report.

For more information on FSA farm loan programs, contact your Park USDA Service Center at (307) 754-9411, Ext. 2.

USDA Continues Conservation Planning and Programs - NRCS Services Available by Phone Appointment Only
All USDA Service Centers, including Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) field offices, are not currently accessible to customers in person.

NRCS staff are working with customers through phone, mail and online communications, and field work continues with appropriate social distancing to help producers with conservation planning and financial assistance through Farm Bill programs. If you need information on a Farm Bill program deadline, please call your local NRCS field office.

Online services are available to customers with an eAuth account, which provides access to the farmers.gov portal where producers can view USDA farm loan information and payments and view and track certain USDA program applications and payments. Customers who do not already have an eAuth account can enroll at farmers.gov/sign-in. Online NRCS services are available to customers through the Conservation Client Gateway link which can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov. Customers can track payments, report completed practices, request conservation assistance and electronically sign documents.

For the most current updates on available services and Service Center contact information, visit farmers.gov/coronavirus.

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Park County USDA Service Center
1017 Highway 14A
Powell, WY 82435
307-754-9411

County Executive Director
Darla Rhodes
darla.rhodes@usda.gov

District Conservationist
Rory Karhu 307-431-2052
rory.karhu@usda.gov

Farm Loan Manager
Tom Schambow

Soil Conservationist
Dicksie Hilderbrand
dicksie.hilderbrand@usda.gov
(307) 271-3126

Farm Loan Officer
Nick Hartley

Soil Conservation Technician
Randy Gibson
randy.e.gibson@usda.gov
(307) 271-3132

Program Technician
Tanya Butz

County Committee
Emily Karst - Chairperson
Tim Acord - Vice-Chairperson
Lynn George - Regular Member

Next County Committee Meeting: TBD